1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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Chapter Eight

CHILDREN'S TALES, THEIR TEXTS, ANALYSIS AND SIGNIFICANCE

It is important for an understanding of the social and psychological development of children in Silwa, to examine the tales, fables, and other stories transmitted to them from time immemorial.[1] Before embarking on this, however, a few introductory remarks should be made in connection with folk literature in general in this community. Such literature is relatively meagre in both quantity and quality compared with some other non-literate communities. In Silwa at present there are no myths, indigenous legends, and hardly any economic lore as in some primitive communities, all of which attempt to explain the nature of the universe, the history and origin of the people, or transmit traditional knowledge as applied to the solution of economic problems.[2] There is no doubt that, before the advent of Islam, and of Christianity before that, the Ancient Egyptian myths and folk literature must have been the oral code guiding the beliefs and values of folk people in Ancient Egypt. The survival of these is still evident, in spite of Islamic doctrines, in beliefs and ideas about jinn, invisible counterpart (Karina), saints, sacrifice, the evil eye, and so forth.[3] The changes in religious and social attitudes of the people, through becoming part of the Moslem society, have obscured the previously existing system of oral tradition. Perhaps some of its elements still persist in a modified form in the folk tales and children's stories found at present in rural Egypt.

The adult attitude towards children's stories is very similar to their attitude towards children's games, and there is hardly any adult, especially amongst men, who admit that he tells stories to his children. Stories, as seen through the 'puritanic' eyes of adults, are considered to be demonic, and of no practical value. Story-telling is also included in the concept of dissipated leisure (lahw) which such a stoically religious community does

[1] G.P. Lestrade, 'Traditional Literature', in *The Bantu Speaking Tribes*, ed. by I. Schapera, London, 1946.

[2] The full text of the stories is given at the end of this chapter.

[3] See E. Westermarck, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco*, London, 1926.

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not accept as one of the commendable spheres of indulgence in a pious life.[1] While mothers may occasionally tell their children a story at night, fathers could never be expected to do it, as it might encourage that intimacy and levity towards them which is incompatible with the ideal of paternal respect. Story-hearing and telling is a feature of the child and adolescent groups. The writer has not found literate people in Silwa entertaining the reading of novels in the modern sense, as they are regarded 'unreal' and of no immediate value.[2] Children and adolescents must be weaned away as quickly as possible from such imaginative frivolities like story-telling, and acquire the didactic literature of proverbs and wise sayings that enable the boy to cope with the realistic and matter-of-fact affairs of life. The accumulated wisdom of the past, the adults think, is contained in these proverbs and the reported deeds and acts of men of religious or social prestige. They are inordinately fond of quoting proverbs and maxims whenever an occasion for them arises. Rattray has observed the African's predilection for proverbs in his speech: much the same might be said for Silwa. He states that the best retort 'for any new-fangled suggestion or argument, however convincing, is to quote some proverb, however banal and inept, for such a reply is invested with all the force and sanctity of immemorial usage, and therefore conclusive'.[3]

Story-telling also includes the interesting events that happened in the village, or that happened to children. It is a more preferable pastime in winter than in summer, when boys, and occasionally girls, gather at a cosy corner outside the house 'to curtail the long winter nights' as one of the boys put it. On the whole, one can say that a child, on the average, spends an hour a week in these story-telling sessions. But this does not mean that all children take part in these sessions, or know fairy tales and stories. In fact, quite a few children, of both sexes, whom I asked in the compulsory school and in the neighbourhood, knew no stories of any kind. If parents tolerate these story-telling sessions, they do not consider them of any educative value at all.

Children, however, listen to stories and tell them to each other, not in the house or in the presence of the father, but usually outside the house. They will stop their narration on the approach of an adult, and consequently the writer was not able to listen to or observe any of their normal sessions. These sessions are seldom held during the day, as the boys believe that story-telling in daylight brings wrath, like sleeping in the late afternoon (nawmat al asr). Here one sees the functional relationship between children's leisure and their economic responsibilities. Through such beliefs, with their concomitant emotional effects, the scope for flouting responsibility for work is delimited in a roundabout way. Like play, the community

[513]

[1] See Chapter VII for the connection of 'lahw' and play.
[2] There are no novels at all amongst the books that the villagers possess.
[3] R. S. Rattray, 'The African Child in Proverb, Folklore and Fact', in *Africa*, Vol. VI, 1933, p. 426. For some of the proverbs collected in the village, see Appendix VI.

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reluctantly admits the value of story-telling to children, accepts its occurrence at night as a safety valve, as then it would not wreck or endanger the 'puritanic' atmosphere.[1]

The first eleven stories recorded in this study are a common stock for most of the boys and girls in the village, but I found no girl who knew any of the rest of the stories. This is understandable, as these stories are usually related and heard by boys and girls till the age of eleven or twelve, but after this age story-telling among girls is frowned upon and punished. This is the main reason why their stock of tales is meagre compared with that of the boys. Here, as in play, girls are expected to toe the line of adults earlier than boys.

Most of the stories collected were from the compulsory school children. By no means all of them knew the full text of the stories, but most of them at least recognized or felt they knew the first eleven stories. In examining those who had known some of the stories, they repeated them in an almost identical way.

Children normally begin their narration of a story by saying: 'There existed' (Feeh), whereupon the listeners reply, 'God exists' (Allah feeh); older boys and old men would normally begin by, 'It happened and in the past many a thing happened, and upon God we rely' (Kan ya ma kan, wa 'ala allah attuklan).[2] The younger boys finish off by exclaiming, 'I've been to your house and come back, I've eaten the hen before the cock' (Ruht 'indakum wi jeet, akalt al farkha gabl addik).

In the text of the stories and tales, one can find reflections of many of the social, moral and religious norms and attitudes. In the manifest content of the stories, such norms and attitudes as those governing the relationships between members of the family, social expectations, religious aspirations and desire for children are not difficult to discern and need no elaboration.

Moreover, anthropologists and psychologists have also tried to explain the latent content of folk literature, myth and legends. The interpretations of Freudian, Jungian, and other schools of psychology have been occasionally alluded to in the footnotes of the story texts.[3] The orthodox Freudians, as well as the Jungians, because of their racial and generalized interpreta-

[1] With regard to the fact that folk-stories are characteristically told at night, *Hermann advances the theory that the choice of night is psychologically significant as after the day's work is finished and both narrator and listeners are tired, their critical powers of thinking, their attention and will are slackened. Thus social activities that are considered inappropriate during the day seem acceptable at night; in the same way certain themes in stories are exclusively acceptable during the evenings, and are incorporated in the folk-tale.* See E. J. Lindgren, 'The Collection and Analysis of Folk-Lore', in *The Study of Society*, p. 360.

[2] This beginning is very similar to the way story-tellers in Iraq introduce their stories, as reported by E. S. Stevens, although by omitting 'ya' he misunderstood the meaning of the phrase and translated it as 'There was, there was not'. *Tales of Iraq*, London, 1951.

[3] C. G. Jung and C. Kerenyi, *An Introduction to a Science of Mythology* (translated by R. F. C. Hull), London, 1951.

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APPENDIX VI

539 Many were the people whose thresholds were made of marble, but who had to be buried in dust.

Alli yibus fi balawi ghairuh, tilhoun 'alaih balaweeh.
He who considers other people's sufferings, would alleviate his own.

Aih yakhud ar reeh min al balaat.
What can the wind scour from floor paving? (You cannot get blood out of a stone.)

Min 'ashar al goam arbaeen yom, ya sar, ya asbah minhum.
He who associates with a group of people for forty days would then either depart, or become one of them.

Alli laih kabeer ma yendaribshy 'ala dahru.
He who has a patron would not have his back beaten.

Alli maloosh kabeer yishtari laih kabeer.
He who has no patron should find one (lit. buy one).

Kul fula wi laha kayyal.
Every kind of bean has a special person to appreciate it (lit. assess it).

Kul sagtah wi laha lagtah.
Everything that falls has got a gatherer.

Al 'ajalah min ashaitan.
Haste is of the devil.

Yinfa'ak dahabak das, wi waladak min dahrak bas, wi tourak min bagarak.
You can only rely on your hidden gold, your child descending from your loins and your calf from your cow.

Sahib balain kaddab, sahib talatah mundfig.
He who has two minds is a liar, he who has three is a hypocrite (usually said about a person who marries more than one wife).

Al khaly yigool 'ads.
The one who is indifferent would say it is lentils (said to a person who tries to underestimate the difficulties of another). The proverb is related of a person who committed adultery in the fields during harvest time; he was pursued by another. During his flight he gathered a handful of lentils. On being caught he was asked why he was pursued; his answer was that because he had stolen a handful of lentils. Yet the pursuer said, 'Of course those who have not seen what he did would say it is a handful of lentils'.

Girat haz wala faddan shatarah.
A small amount of luck (a 'kirat' is one twenty-fourth of a feddan) is better than a lot of hard work (feddan).

Al jahil 'adow nafsu.
The child is the enemy of himself (his own well-being).

[538] For a study of proverbs and proverbial statements, see Edward Westermarck, *Wit and Wisdom in Morocco*, London, 1930. From our list of proverbs we have omitted also those included in this book, e.g. 'Learning is better than goods; 'When the bull falls down, the daggers are many'; 'What the

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eye does not see, the heart does not grieve for;' 'The funeral is great, and the deceased is a dog';[1] 'He fasted and fasted and breakfasted on an onion,'[2] etc. 539

No attempt at any theoretical study of proverbs or any kind of classification has been made here. Reference can be made to the masterly way that Westermarck has treated the subject throughout his work, especially in the Introductory Essay. 538

Here we can only point to the fact emphasized by Westermarck, that a people's proverbs cannot be taken as indicative of their character without full knowledge of other facts that the proverbs do not state.[3]

[1] It is 'mouse' in Morocco.
[2] In Morocco it is 'He remained fasting for a year and breakfasted on snails'.
[3] For examples see Westermarck, *op. cit.*, pp. 58–4.

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politics and even religion cannot always avoid conforming to lines of ethnic cleavage too closely to prove wholly effective instruments of mutual understanding. Science, on the other hand, is absolutely disinterested in spirit. Its discoveries are for the whole world to enjoy. There can be no rivalry between the nations as regards their respective shares in the creation of knowledge except in so far as it takes the form of honourable competition in the training of sound scholars. The time is doubtless coming when more Egyptians will come forward as investigators duly educated in the critical use of evidence; and they will be welcome.

After all, it is hard to say whether the Egyptians themselves or the rest of the world have more to gain from the study of the age-long history of Egypt and of the no less enduring individuality of its people. The country is self-contained enough, thanks to the geographical barriers that shut in the Nile Valley, to maintain a civilization answering to its own needs. Even physically the Egyptian type breeds true to itself. As often as racial intermixture occurs, the foreign strain would seem to become recessive to the point of extinction. On the other hand, Egypt is situated at the meeting-point of three continents. It presides over the junction of the Western and Eastern water-ways of the Old World. How far its influence has extended, whether by direct or by indirect propagation, at various critical periods of history is a problem, much discussed at the present moment, on which the most distant regions may be able to throw light. Any diffusion of culture, however, tends to fade out toward its circumference, and is only to be fully understood by intensive study at the centre. In the case of Egypt it is possible to grasp the complex nature of the centrifugal force thence set in motion all the more thoroughly because there is literary as well as material evidence at the disposal of the archæologist. Silent monuments, too, often form the only yield of the spade. Even pictures speak at best in riddles. Literature, however, when it came into existence in Egypt or in Mesopotamia could in some measure disclose that ethnic psychology which alone is the key to genuine history.

Nevertheless, the psychic life of a people is but partially and imperfectly reflected in its literature. Just as in the individual the unconscious part of the mind may be supremely determinative of the total character, so in a community the non-literary and

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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largely inarticulate classes may do much by way of help or hindrance to shape its destiny. The people of Egypt, having retained their self-identity unimpaired during at least five millennia, a record which puts all other nations into the shade, can be studied now so as to frame a fair estimate of what, psychologically, they have always been. Miss Blackman's work having been mainly among the folk—that portion of the society whose hidden but none the less active impulses and beliefs govern the making of history as it were from below—she is contributing just what is needed to afford an adequate explanation of Egypt's civilizing activity as a spiritual movement.

A word in conclusion as to the usefulness of the woman anthropologist. She is sympathetic by nature. She is not politically suspect. She can get at the women, who as the educators of the rising generation exercise an immense influence on the formation of mental habits. In short, anthropology is as much a woman's job as a man's. It only remains to add that a woman who wishes to be useful in this way must follow Miss Blackman's example, and go through a suitable training before she enters the field.

R. R. MARETT

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THE VILLAGES AND THEIR INHABITANTS

The influence of the deserts may be seen in Egyptian tale-tales, many of which tell of encounters there with *afārīt* and other supernatural beings. Secret caves in "the mountain," as the people call the steep, sometimes almost precipitous ascent to the high-desert plateau, also enter into the adventures recounted by the village story-tellers; these 'caves' are, of course, the ancient rock-hewn tomb-chapels with which the outer face of "the mountain" is in some places honeycombed (see Fig. 3).

Egypt is a land of contrasts, the marked difference between the very fertile Nile Valley and the arid, waterless deserts on either

FIG. 2. EDGE OF THE HIGH-DESERT PLATEAU, THE LOWER DESERT, AND IN THE DISTANCE THE CULTIVATION

side of it striking the eye of every visitor to the country. These physical features are, I think, reflected in the character of the peasants, for it is a remarkable fact that the most divergent traits of character can be seen in a single individual. The Egyptian peasants, in spite of much poverty and sickness, and with few amusements to break the monotony of their lives, are as a whole a wonderfully cheerful and contented people. They are very quick of comprehension, of ready wit, dearly loving a joke, even if directed against themselves, usually blessed with a retentive memory, light-hearted, kindly, and very hospitable; they are also very hard-working. At the same time they are very emotional, highly strung, most inflammable, generally very ignorant, and nearly always conspicuously lacking in self-control.

SOME ANNUAL FESTIVALS

had been erected, wherein butchers and vendors of sweetmeats, toys, and other wares plied their trade, to all appearance doing excellent business (Fig. 143).

Eggs dyed a bright cerise or yellow are a special feature of all these *mawâlid*, and those who sold them attracted a considerable number of customers. These coloured eggs, which are also sold on the Coptic Easter Monday, are used for two games, which are played as follows. In one game two boys or men take part, each grasping an egg in his hand. One of them knocks his egg against that of his opponent, and the man whose egg is not cracked is regarded as the winner and takes the cracked egg of his adversary. In the other game several eggs are arranged in a row on the ground, and a number of men sit at a certain distance away from them. Each in turn rolls an egg toward the row of eggs facing him, and the man who first succeeds in cracking one of them wins the lot. These games are played by large numbers of people at all *mawâlid*, but never by women and girls. Coloured eggs are used for games, in many cases similar to these, in various parts of Europe, especially in the Balkan states. Again, in some of the Northern counties of England coloured eggs are still used in a game played on Easter Monday which closely resembles the second Egyptian game.

FIG. 141. FEMALE 'SERVANT' OF THE SHEIKH UMBĀRAK, WRAPPED IN THE SHEIKH'S FLAG ON THE DAY OF HIS MŪLID

There were other attractions at this *mûlid* of the sheikh Umbārak. In the palm-grove a conjurer in one part and a poet

[Text continues on p. 255]

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SOME ANNUAL FESTIVALS

(*cf.* p. 266, Fig. 152) in another had collected large and interested audiences. The poet was accompanied in his recitations by a woman—and sometimes by two or three men as well—who beat a single-membrane drum. Peep-shows also contributed to the amusement, the pictures shown usually representing favourite national saints and heroes and heroines. Lastly, roughly made little cars hung on wheels, which turned round and round on a horizontal axis, were much patronized by the children (Fig. 144).

A special sheikh of this district, later to conduct the *zikr* (see

FIG. 144. SWINGS, WHEELS WITH HANGING CARS, AND OTHER AMUSEMENTS AT A SHEIKH'S MŪLID

below) in honour of the sainted Umbārak, paraded through the crowd on a donkey, preceded by three men carrying large banners decorated with various designs and inscriptions, and by musicians playing on cymbals and a double-membrane drum. One of the banners belonged to the sheikh Umbārak, but the others came from the tombs of sheikhs in neighbouring villages. Such banners are always carried in procession on the occasion of a *mūlid*, and the men who bear them advance with dancing steps instead of an ordinary walk.

It should be mentioned here that a *zikr* is a kind of religious dance performed by men and older boys only; the women and girls never take part in it. A detailed description of it is given later on.

In spite of the heat, millions of flies, and clouds of dust, the

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796 In spite of the heat, millions of flies, and clouds of dust, the
769 festival of the sheikh Umbārak was conducted with the utmost good humour, and the behaviour of the crowds was perfect. It came to an end at about seven o'clock.

On the following day the annual *mūlid* of the sheikh Ṣabr was celebrated at his village, which is most picturesquely situated on the bank of the Yūsuf Canal. As I have stated in Chapter XV, this sheikh is much venerated, not only in his own village, but in villages for many miles around. I have been present at his *mūlid* on two or three occasions, and each time large crowds have assembled to do him honour.

The festival begins in the morning at about eleven o'clock, and a number of people joined me as I rode through the fields on my way to the village. Upon these occasions a brisk trade is always carried
[443] on, and piles of brightly coloured sweets are exposed for sale, together with toys, cheap ornaments, dates, and other delicacies. The vendors seat themselves under rough booths, which they erect on the spot, and under which they can take shelter from the fierce rays of the sun.

796 When I arrived a large *zikr* was taking place under the shade
788 of the branches of the sacred tree. It was executed by a number
769 of men forming a circle round the sheikh who conducted this religious exercise. The men swayed rhythmically from side to side, nodded their heads, or bent backward and forward as they pronounced the name of Allāh over and over again. The presiding sheikh beat time by clapping his hands, while now and then a *fikīh* would chant passages from the Ḳorān. The ceremony was conducted with great earnestness and solemnity, but some of the performers became so worked up with religious fervour that from time to time they leaped into the air, and finally fell on the ground from exhaustion.

796 Close to where this religious performance was taking place was
769 to be found the usual large wheel, with its hanging seats. Here
[529] the children had congregated, all of them clamouring for a ride, as they are to be seen doing about the whirligigs and swings provided at the fairs in England.

At another spot a poet had collected a large audience, which
[538] listened with evident enjoyment while he gave his recitations to the accompanying beats of two tambourines and a shallow, single-
[533] membrane drum (*cf.* p. 266, Fig. 152).

The banners were much in evidence at this festival, and I

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CHAPTER XVII

THE VILLAGE STORY-TELLER AND HIS TALES

538 [217] THE modern Egyptian peasants are as fond of stories as were their ancestors in the days of Herodotus. Since few of the older people can read or write they have largely to depend for such entertainment on the public recitations of story-tellers. Most villages possess at least one story-teller, who, as a rule, has some trade with which he is engaged during the day. In the evening the male villagers are in the habit of congregating in one another's houses, or in some shop or *café*. To such a gathering the story-teller is a welcome addition, and he tells his [465] tales in return for very small sums of money presented to him by members of his audience. The story-teller may have taken [429] years to collect his tales, or he may have inherited them from his forbears. The peasant is an excellent *raconteur*, possessed of great imagination, very dramatic, and entirely free from self-consciousness.

538 129 114 Among my village friends are two or three story-tellers, and from them I have collected and written down a large number of tales. Some were related to me in my brother's desert camp the first year I was in Egypt. I would appoint a day for the story-teller to visit me, and, as the hour approached, I would see him and the schoolmaster who came with him to assist me in my translations of the stories riding across the lower desert on donkeys. On their arrival coffee was brought, and, when they had partaken [516] of this refreshment, the story-teller seated himself cross-legged on the ground, drew his robe around him, and, after some minutes' reflection, began one of his tales.

538 115 One of my story-teller friends, a cheery person, was a dyer by trade, as, indeed, was made evident by the state of his hands, which were stained almost as dark a blue as his cotton clothes. When he was a young boy he was apprenticed to a firm of dyers, [463] and he would listen to stories told to his fellow-workmen as they plied their task. Having a retentive memory, he stored up all

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these tales, which he now relates to the people of his village in the evening. He also tells his tales to his customers, who often wait while he is dying the cloth which they have brought him. Thus some tedious hours of waiting are pleasantly whiled away.

When he first came to me he was somewhat shy, but after a while, seeing that I was really interested, he would start off without hesitation. Sometimes he would consult the schoolmaster as to what he thought would be most to my taste, giving him a short epitome of two or three stories. Then, when a suitable one was chosen, he would go ahead without further delay. Several stories were recited at a sitting, and occasionally I was writing them down for three or four hours on end. Our servants would often stand near, listening in breathless attention as the plot developed.

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FIG. 153. STORY-TELLER, WHO IS ALSO A WATER-CARRIER BY TRADE

The next year I engaged another man, who was a water-carrier by trade (Fig. 153). I was then living in tents near an out-of-the-way village in Upper Egypt, and the *'omdeh* (headman of the village) kindly placed his reception-room at my disposal. Wealthier villagers would drop in from time to time and take a seat at a respectful distance from me, while humbler folk stood at the doorway, or squatted on the threshold, all alike listening enthralled, and from time to time uttering ejaculations of appreciation.

I was assured that these tales had never been committed to writing, but had been handed down orally. It may interest my readers to peruse the following, selected from a large number in my possession.

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ANCIENT EGYPTIAN ANALOGIES

On p. 236 I speak of the slaying of a victim on the threshold of a new house and at the installation of a new engine or water-wheel. With this may be compared the slaying of victims—an ox and a goose—at the ceremony of laying the foundation of an ancient Egyptian temple.[1]

The unwillingness to save a drowning person mentioned on pp. 238 f. may be the last remains of an ancient belief that to be drowned was to "do the pleasure of Rē'," and that by being drowned a person was divinized, a belief to which Herodotus refers somewhat vaguely.[2] Professor Griffith wrote a very illuminating article on this subject some years ago in the *Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache*,[3] and my brother, Dr A. M. Blackman, has also dealt with it at some length in his *Temple of Dendûr*.[4] It is, perhaps, to be remembered in this connexion that, according to more than one account, Osiris himself met his death by drowning.[5] Possibly the water-spirit, who apparently claimed (in the end successfully ?) the foredoomed Prince,[6] is to be compared with the *'afrit* that the modern *felláḥîn* suppose to be claiming one who is drowning.

It is interesting to note that virtue was evidently attached to onions in ancient as it is in modern times (p. 261), for persons who took part in the procession round the walls of Memphis at the annual festival of Sokar, the funerary god of that city, had onions hung round their necks.[7] People also tied onions round their necks on the night preceding this festival.[8]

The love of listening to stories was certainly no less strong in the ancient Egyptians than it is in their descendants, as is shown by the number of folk-tales preserved to us from all periods. The existence of these stories points also to there having been professional story-tellers in antiquity as at the present day (pp. 268 ff.).[9]

[1] W. von Bissing and H. Kees, *Das Re-Heiligtum des Königs Ne-woser-re*, vol. ii (Leipzig, 1923), Pl. I, Fig. 2.

[2] ii, 90.

[3] Vol. xlvi, pp. 132 ff.

[4] Cairo, 1911, pp. 82 f.

[5] A. Erman, "Ein Denkmal memphitischer Theologie," in *Sitzungsberichte der königl. preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, vol. xliii, 1911, pp. 926 ff.; J. H. Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*, pp. 25, 41.

[6] T. E. Peet, *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, vol. xi, pp. 228 f.

[7] S. Sharpe, *Egyptian Inscriptions from the British Museum and Other Sources* (London, 1837–55), Part II, p. 78.

[8] H. Brugsch, *Hieroglyphisch-Demotisches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig, 1867–80), p. 295; *Thesaurus Inscriptionum Aegyptiacarum* (Leipzig, 1883–91), p. 1144; J. Dumichen, *Altaegyptische Kalenderinschriften* (Leipzig, 1866), Pl. XXVI.

[9] See A. Erman, *The Literature of the Ancient Egyptians*, p. xxix; W. Spiegelberg, *The Credibility of Herodotus' Account of Egypt*, pp. 30 f.

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It should be observed that the story of *The Shah of Persia and his Daughter* (pp. 272 ff.) bears a certain resemblance to the tale told to Herodotus [1] about Mykerinos, his daughter, and the golden image of a cow. If there is any connexion between the two stories, that told to Herodotus may after all be a genuine native folk-tale and not, as Professor Spiegelberg has suggested,[2] a mere dragoman's explanation of a monument—unless, of course, the modern tale is simply a modification of the Herodotean, and reached the masses by way of the Hellenized Egyptians of Græco-Roman times.

[1] ii, 130 f.
[2] *The Credibility of Herodotus' Account of Egypt*, p. 13.

241 This 'leaven of the land' has still to be put to the soil.
242 Twenty times a day the donkey, laden with great panniers
292 or sacks and driven by the fellah's son, carries the manure
293 to the field and goes back to reload. There are no carts or barrows for this work, and the distances are often great. The farmer lays down the manure generously, whether it be natural humus or chemical fertiliser, and packs it by hand round the plant to be encouraged.

Getting in the Crops

461 All this attention is paid to the soil in order that it may yield its fruits. It follows that the fellah's work must continue from seed-time till harvest. The days are gone when he could go away after sowing and return in a few months' time to gather the crop. The struggle for life has become continuous and unrelenting. Since the introduction of cotton and the establishment of perennial irrigation, the fellah has no slack season and is always tending some crop or other.

241 The crops follow a system of rotation covering a period
805 of two or three years. Taking cotton first, the succession
321 will be as follows:

February-October	Cotton
November-May	Wheat, berseem or barley
May-June	(Partly fallow)
June-November	Maize or rice
December-February	Berseem
April-October	Cotton
November-May	Winter cereals or berseem
May-November	Maize (or fallow)
November-March	Berseem or winter cereals
March-June	(Partly fallow)
June-October	Maize or rice
November-March	Berseem

This calendar of crop rotation is observed with but little variation everywhere in the country, according to the need and experience of the farmer. I have translated it into Gregorian months; but the fellaheen keep to the Coptic Calendar, which is based on the Nile flood and goes back to ancient times. It begins with the month of *Tût* (September), in which the Nile reaches its highest level, and divides the solar year into twelve months. There is a series of Arabic
538 proverbs deriving originally from Pharaonic Egypt, which

assign to each month its proper task. Wheat, which at that time was the main crop, is frequently mentioned, but the new-fangled cotton not at all [24].

This same calendar also regulates the Coptic ecclesiastical year, for when Christianity came to Egypt it made no change in the existing customs. The reckoning begins from A.D. 284, the first year of Diocletian's reign, called 'The Year of the Martyrs'. In actual fact, the great persecutions took place in A.D. 304.

Moslems, on the other hand, start from the *hegira*, or Flight of the Prophet (622 A.D.), and count in lunar months.

Since 1875, Egypt has officially employed the Gregorian Calendar, which is gradually penetrating everywhere. The Government has not kept the ancient Egyptian names for the months, nor has it translated the Roman names. It has simply taken over their popular adaptations as follows: - *yanayer, febrayer, mâris, abrîl, myo, yûnyo, yûlyo, oghostos* and so on. The Ministry of Agriculture works by this calendar to the exclusion of the other two, and so, if not actually used by all the fellaheen, it is understood by most of them.

At this point it will be convenient to describe the principal crops of contemporary Egypt, which are also those at which most of the fellaheen work, namely cotton, which is the main source of the country's wealth; maize and wheat, which provide its daily bread; and *berseem*, the fodder of its cattle. Of the rest we shall say only a word or two in passing.

A. THE "GARDENING" OF THE COTTON PLANT

Cotton was not unknown to the Ancient Egyptians. Some fabrics of Pharaonic times seem to be woven of cotton thread, and Pliny mentions its use. Its development in Egypt for industrial purposes took place in the mid-nineteenth century after the experiments of Jumel. Perennial irrigation, introduced about the same time, together with the increase of the population, and the advantageous openings on the English market, very soon made cotton the principal crop of the country. The world crisis of 1930, which led to a slump in cotton, forced the Egyptian Government to restrict it to a quarter of the total cultivated area. Despite

754 with the pre-Islamic and pre-Christian magic of Ancient Egypt.(11)

This affinity is confirmed by the faith of the fellaheen in everything that represents itself to be ancient, primitive, *qadîm*. For many of their superstitious beliefs they can give
792 no other reason. Why is a Coptic monk preferred as a
842 sorcerer? Why should the touching of ancient statues
777 make a woman conceive? Why should a pebble or written charm from the sorcerer give effect to a wish? Because it is *qadîm*. Because it holds in itself the power of the past.

764 The function of women mourners is also traditional. A
[765] fellah dies. At once loud cries from the womenfolk announce it to all the neighbourhood. The common bier is fetched from its place near the *gurn* outside the village. Women wash the body in warm water within the house, while outside rise the wailings of the mourning women.

In their funeral cries they boast of the beauty and fine qualities of the departed, they reproach God for taking him, they call to the dead man, to his wife and children, they cry out to Death itself. These complaints seem natural and improvised. In fact they are no more so than the tears of
[767 the professional mourners, wrapped in great veils (*milayas*)
535] specially for this ceremony, their face coloured black or blue as a sign of mourning, their heads sprinkled with mud. Leading the womenfolk in a ghastly dance, they rise, clap their hands, sway about and fall exhausted, now slackening, now hurrying their cries. Here the women take first place. The men put in an appearance, both at the funeral and on the visit of sympathy, for death is a part of public life. But they participate only by their presence; they say nothing. In silence they follow the bier, clasp the hand of the nearest relation, stay seated for some time by the dead man's house, and make their way home again(11a).

533 Other occasions, less frequent but more joyful, bring the
538 fellaheen together for music and story-telling. The man who brings them these hours of pleasure is the *sha'ir*, reciter, storyteller and singer all in one. He is himself a fellah, but an exceptionally gifted one. It is his melodious voice that has singled him out for the musician's life, but he also ac-
[534] companies himself on the *rebâba*, a single-stringed, sharp-toned violin. He will sing the praises of Mohammed or Jesus, describing the Prophet's appearance in naive, highly-

coloured language. More often he will relate the exploits of Abu Zeid el-Hilâli and his companions, and the loneliness of his wife 'Aliya, the prowess of 'Antar, or the pleasures of the flesh. Many of these improbable stories contain a core of historical truth, and recall those to which the peasants listened under the Pharaohs. (**)

The audience listens enraptured, greeting every point with "Allah ! Allah !" or beating time in rhythmic applause to the song. When enthusiasm reaches its peak, caps are torn off and flung into the air. Then the story has to be begun again.

For important occasions such as a wedding, the reception of a public figure, or the eve of a *mûlid*, a band of musicians adds its support.

The players are untrained, their tunes are simple and obvious, and their orchestration is monotonous, if not discordant. They either improvise variations or play some well-known refrain from memory. Their instruments are the *mizmar*, a shrill-toned bagpipe, the *zummara*, a reed flute, single or double, together with the *urghul* and *salamiya*, which are plucked with the fingers. The music is supported by beating either the *tabl*, a large shallow drum, or the *darabukka*, a kind of tambourine made of a piece of donkeyskin stretched over the mouth of an earthen funnel about a foot wide. All these instruments are of local make, and there is nó peasant festivity at which they cannot be heard.

The crowd is even denser when other attractions find a place in the programme. There may be jugglers, performing monkeys, or snake-charmers, or perhaps a sham duel between two fellaheen who swing their staves (*nabbûts*) this way and that in attack and defence.

Belly dances, puppet shows, and pantomimes (*khawwal*) may still sometimes be found.

These entertainments are usually held on the *gurn* and the neighbouring space, or near the Sheikh's tomb on the day of his *mûlid*. They reach the grand scale at those district pilgrimages that annually attract tens of thousands of fellaheen to commemorate, if not to pray to, the holy "patron" on the presumed site of his life and death. There is El-Sayyid El-Bedawi at Tanta, Sidi Abdel Raheem at Qena, Al-Imam Al-Shafei at Old Cairo, and for the Copts Sitti Damiyana, Marie Girgis, and others. (**)

provided these show real cordiality and interest and have come to see the fellaheen for their own sake.

The same task belongs, by virtue of their very function, to teachers and ministers of religion, who enter more deeply into the life of the village. Whoever assists them in their work shows the most intelligent form of patriotism.

The wives and daughters of landowners are also specially called to this task. One young girl of good family who spends her holidays in the country and is sensitive to the people's needs has been able quite alone to gather all the fellaheen of the *'ezba* and, by telling them stories every evening, to educate them and generally raise their standards. This is true feminism at work.

The essential problem, then, is to undertake and carry through a task of education and enlightenment, which is more a matter of personal understanding and personal service than of committees, speeches and official decrees.

The only thing that can awaken without exciting, help without weakening, free without uprooting the fellaheen is a socially-minded and altruistic spirit in the upper classes. It is from above that a beginning must be made.

There could be no fitter conclusion to this book than a quotation from the great Pope Pius XI (*1):

"Your duty is to afford the worker both material and spiritual help: material help, by so acting that not only legal justice may work on his behalf, but also social justice; that is to say, that he may benefit from all those institutions that have as their aim the betterment of the conditions of the working classes: spiritual help, by giving them the aid of religion, without which they will live immersed in a brutalising and degrading materialism.... There are millions of human beings living in conditions so pitiful and so wretched that they do not even enjoy the minimum of well-being necessary for the preservation of human dignity."

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8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

Calls of the Radish-Vender.

539x
262

48.

Radishes are eaten with great relish everywhere in Egypt, but especially in the country. They are of a particular variety with meaty leaves.

In a manuscript about a hundred years old, belonging to the Reichsmuseum at Budapest, containing poems in vulgar Arabic composed by Copts, there are to be found some also which contain the observation: "After the manner of: Raiyān ya figl aḥḍar". (F. Kern.) [114] [538]

Raiyān ya fiġl aḥḍar,
ya ḥilu zē sukkar!
wel-fiġle di fiġli
wana elli ḥarito 'al-'egli!
nuṣṣ el-balad tišhad-li,
ḥatte-l-banāt el-bukkar.

Fresh, green radishes,
Sweet as sugar!
And these radishes are my radishes
And I have ploughed them with my heifer!
Half the village can bear me witness,
Even to the unmarried girls.

4 "Them", namely: the fields in which they grow.

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

THE FAMILY.

837 Mohammed's dictum regarding wine is also true of love—it has many good sides, but also a great many and even more that are bad and dangerous. The Prophet has therefore cut Cupid's wings as well as he could; by the armour of concealment he protected the sexes from the swiftly wounding arrow of the god, and granted to his faithful believers the joys of domestic love in full, perhaps in too full, measure so soon, and to as great an extent as they could do homage to them. Matches are made early, and love's thirst is usually quenched in an orderly and legitimate manner. Fallen [848] virgins, illegitimate children, bachelors, and old maids hardly [589] exist in Mohammedan countries, although there are perhaps more unfaithful wives and husbands, and especially wives who have gone astray and been divorced, than elsewhere. Existing regulations render it difficult for these faithless members of both sexes to meet directly; but this is managed [548] by the herd of procurers and procuresses, who are comparatively numerous in the East, though held in the deepest contempt. "Women contrive to meet their gallants, even [538] though shut up in a box," says the Oriental himself in a very common proverb, as well as in many a tale. Adultery com- [684] mitted by a woman was punished with drowning down to a short time ago; among the ancient Egyptians by cutting off the nose. But the Musulman is proud with regard to the above-mentioned state of matters, and listens with scorn to the statistical revelations made by the states of the West, which suffer from all kinds of moral sores no less than the more dignified "sick man."

595 Nothing shall here be said in approval of polygamy, but to those who have had lengthened opportunities for watching its effects it does not appear as a rule so black as Western imagination is accustomed at a distance to paint it. A thorough panegyric would perhaps show that it even possesses some advantages on moral grounds; and in the West also it certainly exists in some social circles. In the East it has prevailed from the earliest times, from the Bedouin to the king.

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

Thus strengthened it is possible for the Moslim in his nocturnal devotions to perform the twenty systems of reverential bendings (*rak'a*) now demanded instead of the usual three. On the streets there is not to be sure a surging of people up and down, and there are also but a few of the dealers or artisans' shops opened, but a bustle and traffic at other times unusual on the street at night may still be noticed; numerous sellers of fruits, and especially of confectionery, have lighted up their stations, and, till far into the night, cry their wares, now so largely patronised by young and old; the café's are all well attended, and if one pleases he can now get here besides the black bitter coffee sweetened coffee or a cup of ginger water with sugar, and sometimes also sherbet of rose-water, tamarinds, raisins, St. John's bread, or, lastly, a drop of liquorice juice. A "poet" relates to the by-standers the deeds of the hero Abuset or Antar, sometimes bursting out into song, and accompanying himself by scraping on a one stringed fiddle. In another café a master of music twangs with all the rapidity of a virtuoso the innumerable treble strings of a kind of guitar, and draws from it those weak jingling tones which recall to us our boyhood and the time when we received our first music lessons on the dingy-keyed piano of a country schoolmaster. There the guests listen to a story-teller; with voluble tongue and poetic verse he describes the enchanted princes and princesses, the excursions of the disguised Haroun al Rashid and his viziers, the man-eating monsters, the Jewish enchanters, which form the material for every one of those tales, the number of which is far more than 1001. The narrative is extempore —purely from memory.

In the houses matters proceed in the same way or even with more liveliness. Everybody who has a house to offer "prepares a couch" (*yfrish*) in order to receive guests, and treats them to coffee. On such evenings the merriest humour prevails, and at no time the whole year through does the Moslim appear in such a hearty vein as on the nights of Ramadan. He goes from one house to another and makes a round of calls upon his friends and acquaintances. In

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
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000 their daring to be visible to a distance. The people on the
541 festival ground take up their positions in a number of circles,
in the centre of which performers of all sorts show themselves. Here a silver-haired wise woman or female sheikh
[538] sings rousing religious hymns; there the listening people get
[231] stories of genii and of heroes told to them; here the monkey-keeper puts his red-buttocked baboon through his performances, making him show "the maiden's sleep and that of the old wife, the walk of the thief," &c.; there a group of improvisators are bawling and clapping their hands, ready at a
[538] moment's notice to make a verse for and upon every new
[522] comer. Elsewhere a buffoon is giving amusement by his
536 gestures in theatrical representations, and his wit, which is
[189] coarse, generally obscene, and exceedingly personal. A juggler stuffs his mouth full of cotton and draws out endless ribbons instead. These he winds up together, then shuts them into his magical box, opens the box, and discovers it to be empty. He then summons the magic spirit to his assistance by
[931] blowing a large shell (generally that of *Tritonium variegatum*), opening the box again and a large serpent crawls out of it. In the meantime he goes through all sorts of antics with his boys and assistants. One of these rols him, but the thief is discovered and condemned to death. The juggler bares the culprit's belly, into which he forcibly thrusts a dagger and in order that death may be certain, he withdraws and inserts it several times. A stream of blood spurts out, and the performance is too real and horrible for some spectators. The corpse is covered up, the magic shell is blown, the spirit awakes the boy, who gradually moves his limbs, and soon jumps about as merry as before. The handle of the dagger, as the police have learned, is hollow, and the blade is pushed up into it when brought into contact with the skin, while at the same time a bladder applied to the dagger gives out a stream of blood-red beet-root juice.

1796 On the morning of the festival itself, as upon all the great general festivals of Islam, town and people are decorated and dressed out, work is entirely at a stand-still, and the throng upon the main streets leading to the tomb of the saint is